

Let Us Plead Together



A PERSONAL TALK
with
Non-Confessing Church Members



J. K. Van Baalen, B. D.



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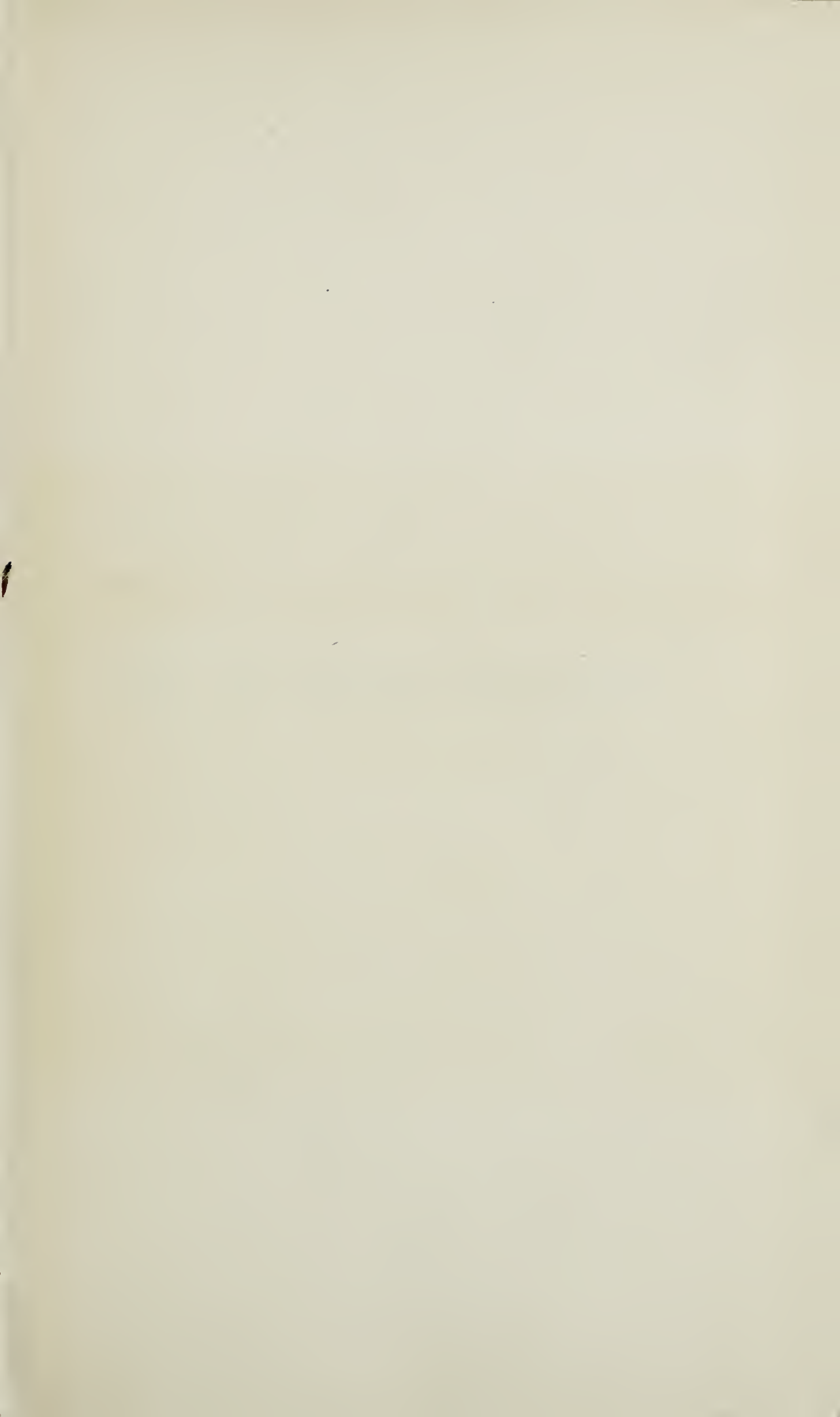
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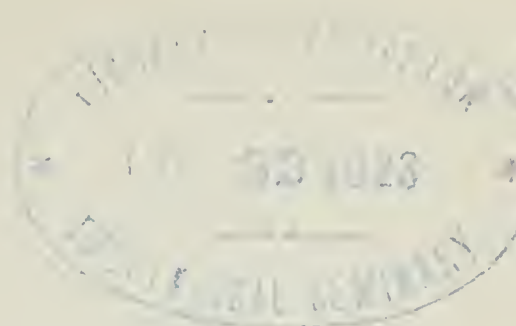
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LET US PLEAD TOGETHER



LET US PLEAD TOGETHER

A PERSONAL TALK

with

NON-CONFESSING CHURCH MEMBERS

by

JAN KAREL VAN BAALEN, B. D.

Author of "If Thou Shalt Confess"

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance: let us plead together; declare thou, that thou mayest be justified."

Isaiah 43:25, 26.

The Reformed Press
Grand Rapids,
Michigan
1923

To my Esteemed Teacher,

The Rev. Mr. Charles R. Erdman, DD.

Professor,

Author,

Preacher,

Pastor,

Christian.



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INTRODUCTION

(Intended for Parents and Pastors)

No sooner had the booklet *If Thou Shalt Confess* appeared but it was suggested that there exists a still greater need along similar lines. Your booklet, it was said, is intended for those who have confessed the Lord Jesus. These, after all, have taken the decisive step. There are the halting ones, who for some reason or other, postpone to do this needful act, though they have reached the years of discretion. The latter are even more in need of a stimulus than the former.

The following pages aim to impart something which, it is hoped, may be of some value in this field. They are offered to our Reformed people with some hesitancy. First, because what has been published of a similar nature in other than our Dutch American circles, seems to be of a slightly different purpose. That which attracted our attention at least, appears to take more the place of our Catechetical instruction. With us the intent should be more to fill in the personal, and spiritual elements which are not fully stressed in class instruction.

In the second place, since the book must be concise to retain the interest of those not so inclined, the field becomes larger than in the former case. If those who lately

confessed have much the same difficulties, with non-confessing church members a great variety of hindrances are found.

There is the annual family visitation. It is often too short. Then, too, the tender blade of the new life is often shy of the bright light of the 'relatives' presence. Thus the printed page may be absorbed more calmly and with more presence of mind.

It is by no means expected that all non-confessing members will go to the trouble to read a booklet such as this. But there will be some meditative individuals in each church. They are known to the watchful eye of every attentive pastor.

Why should not the church use a part of the money gathered from year to year into the catechetical fund, for the welfare of those who made the offer? Or, why should not a loving parent find out, from the pastor; or, better still, through personal contact, if his child's soul has begun to blossom?

The most appropriate time to distribute these pamphlets would seem to be at the close of a winter's instruction.

Whether the following lines do, in any way, further this end is for others to decide. The present writer would be grateful to receive reviews, suggestions, or criticisms.

J. K. v. B.

Hammond, Ind.

DEAR FRIEND :—

The matter I wish to discuss with you is of the utmost importance. You may not be given to much reading; but will you not peruse this small booklet, since the well meant advice I desire to give you may perhaps do you inestimable good?

I promise that I shall not do all the talking. I shall try to let you state your side of the argument. We shall plead together.

I would like to speak of your personal relation to the Savior, as you give evidence of 'it by your attitude toward His Church. For these two go together. One's knowledge of the Truth may be insufficient, and one's love of Christ more or less subconscious, by reason of extreme youthfulness. But where one has matured enough to love the Lord knowingly, that love must show itself also in one's attitude toward the church. It should be impossible to remain a mere baptized member, such as you are thus far.

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Let me try to vindicate that assertion to your own satisfaction, by briefly pointing out to you what is understood by

THE COVENANT OF GRACE

Should you ask, "What is the covenant of grace?" the Westminster Confession of Faith¹) replies, *Man, by his fall having made himself incapable of life by that covenant (the covenant of works), the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life, his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.*

This is plain language, and sound. The covenant of grace, then, is the third covenant God established with man; and His right to enter into the covenant relation with man is at each time beyond dispute. You might, however, look in vain for

¹) Written by the celebrated Assembly of 1643-'49, and still one of the Standards of Presbyterians; ch. 7, par. 3.

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something you would surely expect to find in a *covenant*, for a covenant, according to Webster is, "an agreement between two or more persons or parties, or one of the stipulations in such an agreement." Hence, there are two who enter upon such an agreement, contract, or covenant; and while each party was free not to enter into covenant relation should the conditions seem unsatisfactory to him, after the covenant has been made both parties are bound to fulfil its conditions. Thus, if you should ask a contractor (that is, one who makes contracts, or covenants) to submit to you plans for the building of a home, both you and he would be free to enter into a contract. Only after you have come to an agreement and signed it, are you (both) in duty bound to abide by the terms of the pact.

Now this element of freedom, on both sides, you do not find when God makes a covenant with man. He, God, is free to make the stipulations, and to lay down the conditions for both parties. Man can only rest in the will of God, and obey His orders. This, of course, is the direct result of God's

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sovereignty. As the Creator and Owner of man, the Almighty can do with His creatures as it seems good in His sight.

But there is more. God is love. His covenants with man are meant as blessings to the latter. Again, God asks of man only such things as the latter can do. Thus in the first, or covenant of works, God made man right. Then He demanded that man should do right, stating that He would give eternal life unto him, in case he should use His good gifts (righteousness, holiness) in a good manner (living righteously, holily).

Of the second covenant, which is called the covenant of nature, or, of common grace, we shall not speak at this time. What we are interested in is the third covenant. This is called the covenant of saving, or particular grace; saving grace, in order to distinguish it from common grace which is of a different nature; particular grace, since it is established only with some, and not with all people, as is the covenant of common grace. Its blessings are of a particular nature. Since the second of God's covenants with man is also frequently named that of nature, the third is often

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alluded to, merely, as the covenant of grace. In this case, of course, saving grace.

It is not different here. God demands of man faith in Jesus Christ. He does not require "works" as in the first. He does not ask that man shall keep the law of his Maker in order thereby to gain eternal life. This has been done by Christ. And not only did Jesus keep the law for man, but He also suffered what the sinner should have suffered for violating the commandments of God. Hence, in His great mercy the insulted Father came to His disobedient and wayward child, saying, By grace, without your adding a particle, I will give you eternal life, including complete salvation from your sins and their consequences.

Surely, God has the right to offer so great salvation unto those who may profit immensely by this gracious offer? And you agree also that He has the right to extend the offer to as many as He desires thus to favor, since all had corrupted their way, and transgressed His law, thereby breaking the covenant of works?

But you might object that God does, after all, require of man that he shall be-

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lieve, and that man cannot believe in Christ? This is true. Man, having broken the covenant of works, is unable even to wish for salvation. He hates God. He does not want to be reconciled unto Him. He rebels against the idea of needing a Savior who paid the penalty for him. He is too proud to accept of his own choice, a grace that is offered freely.

But here is the point. When God places man into this covenant relation with Himself it includes that God offers unto the sinner that very faith he needs in order to accept the precious boon. And not only does He offer the needed qualities, but He actually imparts them upon those He is going to save. These, in Scriptural language, are the elect. We must, then, consider, who are

THE PARTIES TO THIS COVENANT

In the light of Scripture there can be but one answer to this question. The Lord God is the one party. Believers and their children form the other. For when the Lord first put His promises plainly in covenant language, he said to Abram, *I will establish*

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my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee (Gen. 17:7).

Now it is evident that the "seed" of Abram denotes his offspring. But on the one hand this is not limited to his physical descendants, while on the other, not all of these were God's elect and are going to be saved ultimately. In the epistle to the Romans you find both of these truths set forth very clearly. In the ninth chapter, where the doctrine of election, or predestination, is treated, you read, *Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called (vs. 7).* God also rejected Esau, and accepted Jacob. For God is free to have mercy on whom He pleases, and to harden whom He wills. Yet, Ishmael who was left out had to be circumcised as a member of the covenant of grace as well as Isaac who was accepted, and that by special command of the Lord, *Gen. 17:10.*

On the other hand, in Romans 4 (read verses 11, 12, 16-18) it is proven that Scripture does not intend the term "seed

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of Abraham'' to be understood of his descendants after the flesh alone. There is also a seed *which is of the faith of Abraham*, as well as a seed *which is of the law*. Hence of Abram it is stated that he is *the father of us all*, namely of us all *who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham*. Which faith is meant? *Of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised*. These words are added in order to show that God made a covenant with Abraham, which would include all of his spiritual posterity; that is, Jews who would believe as Abraham did, and spiritual descendants from among other nations, who would also believe, as did father Abraham. For, all of these were to receive the blessing of that covenant, which may be briefly put together under the name of *righteousness of faith* (vs. 13).

In order to make plain His intention to impart *righteousness of faith* or, forgiveness of sins accepted by faith, to a number of elect from among every race, God gave the promise unto Abram before he was circumcised. Why? Because later on the covenant was to limit itself for a while to

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one nationality. That was to be Abraham's natural offspring. They were to receive circumcision as a token, or a sacrament, which would prove to them that they were taken into this covenant relation. If, therefore, God had instituted the sacrament of circumcision before establishing the covenant with Abram it might have been inferred that the covenant was to extend itself only to those who were to receive the seal of circumcision.

But, since Abram received the promise *before* the limited sacrament, it is plain that the limited dispensation was only an interlude. Consequently, as soon as the intervening period was finished, a new sacrament was instituted in order to help us rid ourselves of the thought that the covenant blessings belong only to the circumcised. This was done by the Savior Himself. With His death and resurrection the original, world-wide application of the covenant blessings was to be realized. Hence, Paul calls the sacrament of baptism, circumcision; a different circumcision, not made with hands as was the old; not consisting of a physical operation, but of a spiritual,

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—of a cutting out, a *putting off the body of the sins of the flesh*. Of what does this New Testament circumcision consist? *By the circumcision of Christ: Buried with Him in baptism*. See Col. 2:11,12.

Thus you see that baptism has come in the place of circumcision as the sacrament, or seal and evidence that we are members of the covenant of grace.

Now where does our difficulty come in? Here: Just as little as it formerly was enough unto salvation to be a physical descendant of Abram, of Isaac, of Israel, and to be circumcised, just as little is mere baptism as a sign and seal of our covenant relation to God going to save us. *For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children* (Rom. 9:6, 7). Ishmael was left out. So was Esau. And so are today the majority of the Jews. For they were, and they are not the true children of Abram, *who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumised*. And thus it is today. The condition of belonging to the covenant group has been stated clearly:

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it is not physical descendancy from Abram, in the line of Isaac, and Jacob. It is faith. As soon as one believes in Christ, as did these patriarchs, one knows that God did make the covenant of grace with him. Nor is this all. The promise again holds, *to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee and I will be their God.* Children, therefore, belong to the covenant circle. Children of believers, who are the true seed of Abram. The covenant blessings belong unto them. They are to receive the New Testament circumcision, that is baptism, as a sign of this. See Mark 10:16; Acts 2:39.

But this is not in itself an unmistakable proof that they are among the chosen unto life. Baptism is not a sure evidence that there is, or ever will be, true, saving faith; not any more than the circumcision of the little Jewish baby was that. Consequently, we find, among the baptized covenant youth, all kinds of folk. There are those who believe in Christ ever since their consciousness awakes. They always loved Christ. At first, after the manner of little ones, without being able to explain their emotions. They could not very well come

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forward with concise and clear ideas, or give reason why they loved Him. But as they develop intellectually, and physically, they become more conscious of their love, and what it means. They know that they are converted, for in their hearts they find two tendencies. There is the old man as well as the new, of which Paul speaks (see Romans 7). But how or when their conversion took place they cannot tell. Altho all those who have been set apart unto the Lord's service in baptism are thereby obliged to walk before Him in newness of life, the above mentioned is by no means the only case. There are those who live a worldly, sometimes even wicked life, until in later years the faithful Covenant-God fulfills His promise to them, bringing them to repentance and faith.

Many there be who *halt between the two sides*. Openly to choose against God, and to revel in sin they do not dare. Firmly to decide that with the aid of God they shall forsake evil, and do good, is more than they are willing to undertake. They attend Sunday School and Catechetical Classes from year to year; but they do not step

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forward with the bold and glad confession, *I know that my Redeemer liveth*. In times of spiritual dullness, such as these are, they are very numerous. Calvin was of the opinion that one should be able to discern the broken body of Christ at the age of fourteen. And why should not a lad of fourteen be able to say, I love Jesus, for He is my Redeemer? Yet it is by no means uncommon in our day to see young men and women of twenty years and more, still linger in the same preparatory classes they entered at the age of fifteen, and, for all one can see, without apparent result.

This is not surprising. Our churches have had smooth sailing for many a decade. Most of their members did not join the ranks because of any strong conviction. They were born into the church. It was not as in the days of earlier or later persecutions, when joining the church demanded sacrifice; often imperiling one's life. It has been rightly said, "When the church expands, and becomes like unto the stream which loses in depth that which it gained in width, what should be the rule becomes exception. Most of those who were set

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apart unto the service of God do not serve Him from their youth; a rather general unwillingness to serve God reveals itself to the contrary ¹).”

Such is the condition today. While a Presbyterian minister of our own day still speaks of preparing to commune at the age of twelve ²), I fear that among us the pastor who would begin to invite boys and girls of thirteen or fourteen years of age to come forward and confess their Savior, would be in danger of being criticized for not taking the matter of confession seriously.

And yet I take this matter so very seriously that I am convinced I realize the importance of confessing Christ far more than they who remark of an occasional confessor-at-fifteen, “Surely, he does not know what he is doing.” Now then, if you will bear with me another minute before I shall give you an opportunity to voice

¹) J. Van Andel, *Pastorale Brieven*. Kampen. G. Ph. Zalsman. 1907. p. 41.

²) *Preparing to Commune*. Eight Studies for a Catechumen Class by George Taylor, Jr., B.D., Ph.D., Western Theol. Semin. 1918.

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your objections, I would like to say just a word concerning the

NECESSITY OF CONFESSING THE LORD JESUS

I must return to the Covenant of Grace and its seal. When you were baptized, God, the Triune God, in His infinite mercy, promised and sealed unto you the choice of His blessings. Just recall the beautiful words of our "Form for the Administration of Baptism." *For when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us that he doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for his children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit. And when we are baptized in the name of the Son, the Son sealeth unto us, that he doth wash us in his blood from all our sins incorporating us into the fellowship of his death and resurrection so that we are freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God. In like manner, when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us*

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by this holy sacrament that he will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins, and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.

You see that in these words (which are in all points conformed to Scripture) God is said to have given Himself away to the one who is being baptized. God the Father, is stated to forgive, to adopt, to take care. Of God the Son, it is asserted that He washes from sin, that he removes every barrier standing between God and the sinner. Of God the Holy Spirit, it is claimed that He applies unto us the salvation which is prepared by Christ; and, that He enables us to begin a new life, to proceed in this new life of sanctification, and that He will continue to impart unto us the armor needed in the good fight, until we shall be fully conquerors.

From this you may readily infer that God has the right to demand that we accept the proffered grace, and live for Him. And

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so He does. To live for God, however, means to *love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind* (Mat. 22:37). If anyone so loves his Lord, that love cannot remain dormant for years and years. *We, having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken: we also believe and therefore speak* (2 Cor. 4:13). You see, if you truly believe in this Triune God, that is, if you believe that He imparts Himself to you in the manner described above, you cannot keep it to yourself. It is not a matter of, Shall I confess, or shall I not? Shall I do it now, or at some future, hazily undefined, period? Your love becomes a flaming fire, which would consume your heart unless it find a way out. True faith must reveal itself, and that both in word and deed. And for this reason Paul mentioned these two, faith, yes, but also confession, as the two requisites in order to be saved: *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart..... thou shalt be saved. For....with the mouth*

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confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9, 10).

And in the same spirit the Master Himself has promised that in the day of His second coming He will confess before His Father whosoever shall have confessed Him before men. On the other hand He equally solemnly warned: *But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.* See Matt. 10:32, Luke 12:8. Nor is this denial necessarily in the bold and open manner in which Peter denied his Master, with cursing and swearing. *For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels (Luke 9:26).*

Confessing Christ, then, is giving utterance to the faith within you, which of its very nature cannot but be expressed since faith is the living cord which connects you with Christ as the controlling power in your life. I do not expect you, therefore, to make confession rashly; but, if for one reason or another, you refrain from con-

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fessing your faith I have the right to infer that there is no faith extant. And that would be very serious and sad indeed. *For without faith it is impossible to please Him* (Heb. 11: 6).

Hence, there must be something wrong with him who is baptized and grows up without confessing his Savior. For this reason I would like to discuss with you some of the things that seem to stand in the way of a complete surrender to Christ. Perhaps I may be able to express your own sentiment; and should I be able to remove the difficulty felt by you, that would occasion great joy to you and me alike.

The first obstacle found I might call open

HOSTILITY

The carnal mind is enmity against God (Rom. 8:7). This we see in those who deliberately transgress His commandments, turn their back on Him, and take pleasure in sin. Should I have thought at all that this were your case I would not urge you, of course, to even begin to think of confessing Christ. I would merely remind you

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that you have to do with a God Who will not tolerate sin, Who is a *consuming fire* (Heb. 12:29); that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God*. (Heb. 10:31); and above all, that, *That servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes* (Lk. 12:47). I would ask you whether after all, your own conscience does not tell you that you are responsible for your deeds; that God is just if at the end He will punish you for your wickedness; whether you think that in the day of judgment you will take the same pride in your present sinful ways; and whether you expect to assume the boastful attitude toward the Holy One in that day?

But I do not cherish the thought that you are of this type. Most likely you would not even have followed my discussion so far had you been of this frame of mind. Only let me warn you that the very company of such people should be shunned by you. Do not think that you, whose spiritual life is at best but incompletely developed, could inhale the atmosphere of the mocker;

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of the Sabbath-breaker, without injury to yourself.

What you need is to associate with good Christian people, who live their confession, and take an active part in the work of the church. This may, under God's blessing, prove a stimulant toward overcoming that habitual attitude of

CARELESSNESS

which characterizes many a young man and woman.

When asked why they do not confess their Savior they reply, "I have not thought enough about it." But this is awful. Here you are all the way from eighteen to twenty four years of age. You have thought of your earthly career, and you have for a number of years been preparing for the future. Perhaps you have even let your thoughts wander into the direction of matrimony. Thus in every way you seem to have reached a stage of maturity, with the one exception only that to the development of your spiritual life you have paid no attention. Is it not time that you should think of these things? Are you not playing

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with fire? For, no matter how little we like to think of death approaching, is it not *appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment* (Heb. 9:27)? And you are no exception to that rule? Now, I am not asking of you, who are still young, and have life before you, to go your way meditating upon the terror of death. Not at all. But: You do not know *when* you will die, do you? Or *how*, nor *where*? You do know this one thing *that* you are going to die, sooner or later. Then what would be better, to face the inevitable, and prepare for it, or to ignore it? In the first case death will have no terror for you. You are ready whenever it comes. Hence you may forget about it to a large extent and prepare for a useful life here on earth. In the other case, you will never be able to remove the awkward thought of the impending fate entirely from you. Every funeral procession you will meet, each crape you will see on a door will remind you, "Hodie mihi, cras tibi: Today me, tomorrow thee." If the sting be taken out of death, life becomes bearable. Without this we can only succeed in covering up partially that which

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we do not wish to see, and blindfolding ourselves. In the latter case, death may come after a long time; yet it will overtake us unaware. But if we are prepared the worst will be the best thing: death will be a passing over from an imperfect life into the perfect, led by the hand of an able Pilot. For of Christ, it is stated, that he became man *that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage* (Heb. 2:14, 15).

Oh, how foolish you are, are you not, in passing by the salvation, in unwarrantedly postponing to apply for the great salvation Jesus has offered you since the day He had you baptized into His precious Name! And how loathsome you must be in the sight of God! You think that it is a small matter to go about your daily routine without making sure Christ is your personal Redeemer? You forget that of all people none are more offensive than they whom He has taken into His church, but they neither love nor hate, but just ignore Him. The Lord your God is a jealous God. He wants

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to be first in your heart, to occupy the prominent place in your life. Of all seven churches in Asia the Laodicean Church was most despicable in the sight of Christ for this very reason. To them He sent the message, *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth* (Rev. 3:15, 16). And here you lightheartedly assert that you have not given the matter of your personal relation to Him much thought! Is it not time that you should pay more attention to these things? Would it not be good should you decide to pray every night, "Lord, make me more serious minded. Grant that I may see the values of life in their true proportions. Teach me to put first the more important things. Grant that I may think more of the salvation Thou hast so graciously promised me. I ask this in the Name of Him in whose Name the promise was made sure."

Perhaps, however, I have not pictured you right. You agree that there are such people, but you are not of their number.

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To the contrary. You have often thought of giving your heart to Jesus, and confessing to the world the fact, but your difficulties are different. You are one of those of whom Scripture says, *Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many*

INVENTIONS

that is, excuses, (Eccl. 7:29). Would you mind if I mention some of the inventions your erring heart has produced? Or the heart of some one else? I would divide them chiefly into two kinds. There are bold inventions. And there are specious excuses.

(A) BOLD INVENTIONS

Some say, I cannot belong to the same church with people who gossip, slander, or swear. My answer would be, Friend, *why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye* (Matt. 7:2)? "That is no mote", you say. But you should not judge some one else, especially not as long as you are far from perfect yourself. These people may be better Christians than you

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are. They may at times feel very badly on account of the many and grievous sins which still dwell in their breasts. For no Christian gets rid of sin in this life. But every Christian fights against it. And gradually, though falling, rising, and stumbling once more, he makes progress on the way of life. In case the people you are referring to do not repent is that a sound reason for *you* not to obey the Master's command? True, the church on earth is not perfect. No one denomination is. No single member is. Would you go so far as to deny for this reason that the denomination to which you belong (for you are a baptized member of it) is not a church of Jesus Christ? Did He withdraw His Spirit from it entirely? If not so, is it not possible that as soon as you begin to think more of your own sins you will be offended less by some one else's? That when you start to pay more attention to what is lacking in you, you will appreciate Christ and His church instead of pointing to the shortcomings of others? You should not seek admission to the full rights of membership because of people, nor should you refrain from doing

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so on account of them. The one for whose sake you should do it is Christ. For He is the head of the Church. To Him you go when you come to His church in spite of its imperfections.

Or, did you intend to say that "since there are so many hypocrites in the church, you can be just as good without its walls as within, nor are they who belong to the church any better for it"? In that case permit me, my friend, first of all to deny you the right of generalizing. That is always a very poor way of reasoning. I admit that the church also contains hypocrites, but how many, is known neither to you nor to me. We had better be careful lest we place ourselves in the judgment seat of God. That is a place where we do not belong. And we might judge erroneously. *For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart* (1 Sam. 16:7).

Secondly, your argument does not hold. You do not deny, do you, that, altho it is possible to belong to the church as a hypocrite, there are also sincere members? Such as truly seek to serve the Lord? Nor that

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such upright fearers of God are more likely to be active members of the church, and to seek their associates in the church than to remain by themselves? That these guileless Christians would not leave the church because in it they receive many blessings of God? Now then, I am not asking you to increase the number of the insincere. But I want you to join the ranks of the truthful within the church. Please, do not deceive yourself. Do not point at some one else's faults in order to cover your own. For *that* is the hypocrisy of the Pharisee itself. It will lead you nowhere.

Thirdly, have you stopped to think why there are, and must be hypocrites in the church? Let me tell you. There is a *human* reason. These people join the church of Christ because it soothes their conscience. *They* know very well that the church is better than the world. Now by being church-members they make themselves believe that they are better than their actions bespeak. With others, it is still worse. They join the church because it looks respectable. They expect to gain the confidence of men, for honesty is expected of

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church-members. Thus, to them religion is "a cloak for our meanness and shame." Very logical, is it not?

There is also a *diabolical* reason. The devil wants the church to consist of dishonest folk as well as of true Christians. A church with nothing but saints on its roll would demand too much respect. Many who now halt between two sides would be drawn irresistibly toward the church. But the devil would rather see them stay outside. Hence he, the enemy, goes and sows the tares among the wheat. Thus he can more easily deceive the doubtful. He shows them his own workmanship within the Church. He falsely infers that "this is the result of the church." Then, he commits the sin of generalizing. He concludes, "If that is the specimen the church turns out, why should you, Mr. Goodman, join such a bunch?" With the possible consequence that Mr. Goodman stays away from the church, from its means of grace, from its many excellent members, and in the end considers himself too good for all this sham. And the devil keeps him. *He* chuckles.

Again, there is a *divine* reason why

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hypocrites should be in the church. I do not mean to say that the church officers should not bar or expel such hypocrites whose untruthfulness can be proven. Far from it. But there is a divine reason why it shall never be possible to detect them all. Christ spoke of it in the parable of the wheat and the tares, which you may read in Matthew 13:24-30. The reason set forth is that the right of separating the good from the evil is His, and His only. His time to do this has not yet arrived. If, in the meantime, we should take the work out of His hands we might commit errors, and expel the deserving with the ill-deserving. It is easy to see why Christ tarries. The number of the elect is not yet complete.

Thus by giving Satan a chance to work, even in His own most precious church, Christ will at the end of things come out of the conflict a more complete victor. Had He permitted the enemy to work only outside the church he could always claim that he had not had a fair chance. But now it will appear that *the harvest indeed is plentiful* notwithstanding the sowing of tares by the enemy.

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So I think we may drop the entire argument of not joining the colors because of undesirable soldiers among the ranks. Instead of judging others we had better make sure that our own motives are pure.

There is another bold objection which is often heard. It is claimed, "I cannot help it that I was baptized and belong to church. I did not ask for it." I know it. No one would have ever asked for it unless God had first made him desirous of salvation. But, let me ask you a simple question. Supposing your parents were very poor. They cannot afford to give you an adequate education. Along comes a man who says, "When that boy grows up I will give him education, money, and everything necessary to start out for himself." Would that be right? Seeing that he offered nothing but benefits, would he not have the right to make the promise?

You say, "Yes". Do you, then, consider salvation a less important gift than riches? *The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord* (Rom. 6:23), is it not? Did not God have the right, then, to offer you this free gift before you could realize what

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His offer meant? Did He not have the right to guarantee the gift to you as a babe in baptism? Remember that God promised only good, and no evil. "To be a God unto thee." The only thing required of you is faith which gratefully accepts the gift, and, this very faith is part of the promised blessing. As I reminded you at the beginning, "the Lord was pleased to make a second covenant, promising to give to all those that are ordained unto life, his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe." See Eph. 2:8, Phil. 1:29.

But the reason, why I consider this invention one of the most wicked, is, because at bottom you blame God for your own sinfulness. God offered you salvation, including every blessing needed by unfortunate man. You are unwilling to apply for the blessing. Now you state, "I am not to blame that I have been baptized." As if there is any blame in the case at all! Surely, you will not curse God for establishing with you, sinner, lost sinner, a covenant of *grace*? Had you not better accept the gracious promise?

But no, you are not so easily caught. You

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have sought out another invention. "Well", you remark, "if not all baptized people are going to be saved in the end, but only the elect, I shall wait until the end. We shall see. If I am among the fortunate elect, I shall be saved, and otherwise not."

That is true. But to wait until the end would be too dangerous. The very fact that God has nowhere revealed who are and who are not among the elect should put you on your guard against starting from the top. You cannot climb a ladder from the top. You must needs begin at the bottom rung. But the bottom rung is repentance, not election. Your salvation, as far as the practical carrying out of the work goes, begins here on earth. It will end in heaven. It begins with God promising you, *I am the Lord thy God, Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it* (Ps. 81:10). It will end with your looking into the things which are at present hidden from your eye.

But again you plead your cause. You declare that you may be justified. For the sinner would rather blame God than to be responsible himself. So you continue, "But if I cannot even will to be saved, why

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should I try to come unto Christ? It will not work anyhow. I cannot come to Christ except God works first, according to your own doctrine, and of this work I notice nothing. Did not Jesus say, *No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me, draw him* (John 6:44)''?

Very true. But let me counterplead with another question. What right have you to suppose that God the Father is not drawing you? When He had you baptized this too was sealed and promised that He would draw you unto Christ. This He does by the preaching of the gospel, by the reading of a booklet such as this. These are outward means which He uses in order to bring about the inward change. Not always, no. Some are hardened. *To the one we are the savour of death: and to the other the savour of life unto life* (2 Cor. 2:16). But here is my question, 'What right do you have to presuppose that God does not mean the gospel call in your particular case just in the way in which it comes to you?' Whence do you get the right to take for granted that when God promised you salvation in the way of faith, He intended not to impart

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this faith unto you? I claim that all God's dealings with you so far have pointed in the opposite direction. I could mention a string of facts which should lead you to believe that the promises were meant as they came unto you. There is the fact that you were born of Christian parents, and not on any "dark continent." There is your baptism. There is the restraining power of God which has kept you from worse ways than you have gone. There is the invitation extended to you to "come and take the water of life freely." And tho you have all this, you would prefer to depart, not, from what you did actually receive at His gracious hands; but, from the only thing you do not have, that is an insight into His hidden counsel. And that only because there is a possibility (by no means a certainty) that God did not wish to save you. Do you not see that your course of action is irrational? That you will never be able to excuse yourself before the Judge of heaven and earth with such inventions as these, because He would hold up before you His many promises, His great patience, and blame you for your unwillingness to take

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Him at His word? Truly, you are heaping sin upon sin.

What you should *do* to get out of the dilemma? You should pray as follows, "Lord God, Thou, Who hast included me in the covenant of grace, grant that I may see Thee as the God of the sure covenant: 'The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.' Teach me to take Thee at Thy word, that I may accept the mercy that has been offered me many a time; lest I should experience Thy righteous wrath. Draw me, Father, and make me see that Thou art drawing me. Deliver me out of all my miseries, and do graciously prevent that, to all of my iniquities, I should add the heinous sin of making Thee a liar."

With the sure conviction that such a prayer will be answered I now turn to the

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less culpable "inventions". They are less guilty because they do not charge the Holy One with sin, but proceed from a desire to belittle the need of conversion; or, to postpone it. These I called

(B) SPECIOUS EXCUSES

that is, excuses which appear nice, but are so only seemingly. These are the various aspects under which

FEAR

asserts itself. Many there be who are afraid that their sins are too great. When I speak to them of confessing Christ, they reply, "I am guilty of a great sin." That is why you consider the church too sacred for such a one as you are? I am glad, my brother, on your behalf. For this, if anything, is an unmistakable sign of grace. Not, of course, if you only make the statement in order to excuse yourself. But I take it that you are sincere, and that you actually see your sin as a terrible burden. My friend, you should thank the Lord for this. Have you ever spoken to the natural man? He will not grant that he is a sinner. He may concede

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the fact in this general way, that we are all sinful; that "none of us are angels." But do not tell him that he is worse than any one else. Do not ask him whether he considers himself too corrupt to be accepted into the Kingdom of God's grace. He would not admit this. Do not inquire into his sense of guilt. The natural man is proud, and self-satisfied. But it was grace which made a David say of himself, *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God.* (Ps. 51). How much good does one find within himself when praying thus? Job was *perfect and upright, and one that feared God. and eschewed evil* (Job.1:1), according to God's own judgment. Yet the same Job stated, *Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee* (40:4)? and Paul the apostle called himself *chief of the sinners* (1 Tim. 1:15).

So you see, it is the grace of God which makes one see his iniquities. You need, however, more than the knowledge of sin. You cannot be convinced of your own unworthiness too deeply, but you must know equally well, that the love of Christ is

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greater than your former hatred. The same David added, *A broken and contrite heart. O God, Thou wilt not despise* (vs. 17). Paul did not merely say that he was chief of the sinners, but, *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners: of whom I am chief.* John taught how we may get rid of the burden of sin: *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1 John. 1:9).

There is but one sin which cannot be forgiven. It is the so-called sin against the Holy Spirit of God. But no one need be afraid on this account. For when we consider the passages dealing with this sin (Matt. 12:31, Heb. 6:4-6) we find two things. We see that the nature of this sin is to oppose the work of God's Spirit willfully, and deliberately. Not merely to keep the door of our heart closed when we hear the Savior knock, is to commit this terrible crime; but, to oppose His work with others by ascribing the work of God, while we know it to be such, to the devil. This is done from hatred against God and against

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the coming of His kingdom. Again, we are taught that such people cannot repent. They may become afraid of the consequences of their sins with a fear leading to suicide, as was the case with Judas Iscariot, but they cannot feel sorry because of the greatness of their trespasses as such. They glory in sin, though they may regret its results.

With this one exception, *All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men* (Matt. 12:31).

I pray you, therefore, do not think less great of the power of Christ unto salvation than you do of your own sinfulness. *Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin* (Is. 1:18; 1 John 1:7).

And what is more, this cleansing grace has been promised you in baptism, and that by a God Who knew how great your sins would be; and He knew it better than you will ever see it. So to you I say with boldness,

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“Come to Christ, confession make,
Come to Christ, and pardon take.
Trust in Him from day to day:
He will lead you all the way.”

Yes, the latter also. For it is not uncommon that after this first obstacle has been removed, the young convert still hesitates. And upon inquiring why he still keeps aloof, he answers, “What if I join church, and cannot live right afterward?”

Yet, this form of fear, too, should not be indulged in. Let me first, however, object to your term, “if I join church”. Making confession of faith is not joining church. You are already a church-member. You are not a full member, sharing all the privileges of church membership; but you are a member just the same. This is one reason why you should leave the principles, and go on unto perfection. For you cannot remain a child. You cannot do it physically. Nor spiritually. As to your scruples in regard to “living right”; and to the oft repeated question, “What would people say if I confessed, and should not live right afterwards?” I have a few things to reply.

First: Let us rule man out altogether. There is a far more important question for

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you to consider. It is this: 'What would God say should you confess His Son as your Savior, and live in sin afterwards?' You agree that He would disapprove of it? Not audibly now, but surely in the day of judgment? But does that imply that for this reason He will approve of your remaining a baptized member of His church? There are three things you might do. You might confess Christ, and afterward live in sin. You might not confess Him at all. Or you may confess Him and live "in newness of life." The first two are wrong, and directly against His commandment. The last course only is the right one to take. You cannot, then, improve much upon not doing the first evil by committing the second. The only thing to do is to follow the last named course. Come, brother, confess Christ, and live a life of holiness.

You say you cannot do it? Jesus knew it. Yet He said, *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect* (Matt. 5:48). Now what is the whole secret of this apparent discrepancy? It is very simple. When Christ calls any one to follow Him He will impart the needed

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strength to do it. "He will lead you all the way." That is it. Making confession of faith surely implies a promise to live according to God's commandments. That is no slight affair. Well may we search our hearts whether we have a true desire to live *not only according to some but all the commandments of God* (Heid. Cat. A. 114). To make confession of faith is not to express our *ability* to do so, but to give utterance to our *willingness* to do so. When you make confession in the right spirit you do not say, 'From now on I will show the world what I can do'. You do not pray, *God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are*; but you beseech Him, saying, *God be merciful to me a sinner* (Lk. 18:9). In other words, what I ask of you is not that you should make any promise whatever concerning things you will do in your own strength, but since you have had the promise sealed unto you so long, and have heard the invitation to come so often, I want you to come and say, with Augustine, "Lord give that which Thou demandest, and Thou shalt not demand in vain"; *Lord, save us, we perish* (Matt. 8:25).

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“Nothing in my hand I bring:
Simply to Thy cross I cling.”

To be sure, when confessing Christ as your Savior, you promise that you will swear no more, that you will steal no more, that you will foster impure thoughts no longer. But your confession of Christ as *Savior* implies first of all this: Though God requires of me all these things and many more, yet am I unable to do them. Hence I flee to Him Who is able with every temptation to show me the way out. I have His sincere offer to enable me to keep God's commandments. For this reason I come, and I do so claiming the promise. *For He is faithful that promised* (Heb. 10:23). So you see that while you are trying to make a nice argument out of your inability, stating, “I do not trust myself”, your action really says, I do not trust the Lord God. Oh please, do not delay your self-surrender any longer for such specious reasons as this.

“Just the same”, I hear you say, “should I take the step you are urging me to take, some important changes must occur in my life. I could not go to theaters, and I will

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be honest to confess that I like to go to theaters, to dances, and do other things which seem contrary to true church-membership.”

I am glad that you state your mind frankly. Thus only can we come to a mutual understanding, and our discussion become profitable. Certainly, there are many things in this world which seem beautiful, and attract the senses, especially of the young. But they are not essentials of happiness. Neither are they as gratifying as they appear to be. Nor does any one yield to Christ without receiving ample compensation for what seems to him at first to be the rendering of great sacrifices. *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come (1 Tim. 4:8).* Behold, says the Savior, *I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me (Rev. 3:20).* The whole question, then, can be reduced to this, ‘Would you rather go to Vaudeville and burlesque shows, or sup with Christ?’ Remember His warning word, *Ye cannot*

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serve God and Mammon (Matt. 6:24). You must choose, my friend; and I think you have come to the parting of the way. The very fact that you have been considering this matter and have placed yourself before this dilemma, seems to me to indicate that fact plainly. The next few days, nay hours, of your life may become decisive of the course your life will take from now on, and, of your eternal state as well. "Where will you spend eternity?" The answer to that important question will depend upon the decision you will make before long. It is because of the enormous moment of your early decision, it is because of the fact that Satan will surely assail whatever you have of faith, that I would fain be of some help to you in your crisis. Now, may I suggest that you have not opened the door far enough for Christ to enter? And is not that precisely why you have not been able to see the nothingness of things to be surrendered, as over against the joy your soul will taste when you ask Him to sit upon the throne of your heart? You know you cannot have both Christ and the world. He admonishes you, *Love not the world, neither*

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the things that are in the world (1 John. 2:15). You reply, "Yes, Lord, I would like the salvation Thou offerest, but I still love the world, and the things that are in the world." *No man can serve two masters* (Matt. 6:24). You have never heard of any one who gave up the things, the evil things, that are in the world, and received Christ, who regretted his deed, have you? I have, however, known those who repented bitterly because they did not turn to Christ earlier in life.

The thing you need, then, is more love to Christ.

"More love to Thee, O Christ,
More love to Thee!
Hear Thou the prayer I make
On bended knee;
This is my earnest plea:
More love, O Christ, to Thee,
More love to Thee,
More love to Thee!"

O, I believe, *thou are not far from the kingdom of God*. While the world is still drawing, and Satan is trying to keep you from Him, Christ is knocking. "Jesus is tenderly calling thee home." If you know not what to do, if your faith is not vital enough to formulate a prayer of its own,

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you should just repeat the prayer of others. I advise you to go over the following hymn prayerfully, and to repeat this prayer until the *joy that passeth understanding* will dawn upon your soul:

“Nearer, still nearer, close to Thy heart,
Draw me, my Savior, so precious Thou art;
Fold me, O fold me close to Thy breast,
Shelter me safe in that ‘Haven of Rest’.

Nearer, still nearer, nothing I bring,
Naught as an off’ring to Jesus my King;
Only my sinful, now contrite heart,
Grant me the cleansing Thy blood doth impart.

Nearer, still nearer, Lord, to be Thine,
Sin, with its follies, I gladly resign;
All of its pleasures, pomp and its pride,
Give me but Jesus, my Lord crucified.

Nearer, still nearer, while life shall last,
Till safe in glory my anchor is cast;
Thro’ endless ages, ever to be,
Nearer, my Savior, still nearer to Thee.”

But perhaps you reason, “All that is all right. And to be able to point to Christ as my own dear Master, certainly appeals to me at times. There are periods when my heart is touched. This occurs during the preaching of my pastor, and at other times. But, it seems, if I were a Christian, these periods ought to be much more frequent,

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and they should last longer. Hence I am afraid that my superficial emotions are not indicative of true faith." Again I wish to plead with you. With all the power of conviction which my word is able to carry I assure you that it is exactly you who are in sore need of connecting yourself with Christ firmly and definitely. Whenever you hear a word which makes you think, I wish I had that, I wish I could say, 'That is my privilege', be sure it is the Master Himself knocking at the door of your heart. In such cases do not leave the place where you are without breathing a word of prayer in silence. Say, "Oh God, I wish I had that. Help me, Lord, grant unto me the joy of salvation. Do not permit this impression to evaporate without bringing me closer to Thee."

Have you not read of the birds of the air which came and ate the seed that was sown? Follow up your good impressions with just a short, but fervent prayer. Such prayers take but a few moments. But they come from the heart. That is what counts most in prayer. It is this which develops spiritual life.

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You should, however, be on your guard against making a common mistake. Do not think that God will give you an advance supply of grace, of faith, of religious emotions. For He will do so neither before, nor after you confess the Lord Jesus. He will feed your spiritual life as He nourished the physical life of the Israelites in the wilderness. Day by day they had to go out and gather their Manna. Day by day you will have to appeal for fresh impressions of His love and of your faith. Now, will you not admit that you, instead of waiting for your religious emotions to multiply themselves automatically, should implore your Covenant-God to renew these tokens of His loving care? Pray, do not deceive yourself. Do not mark as sincere hesitancy that which is due to lack of prayer. If you would pray more, you would rest more assured. *For all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive* (Matt. 21:22). But if there is time for everything except for prayer, do you marvel that God, after giving you the thirst of living water, does not quench the thirst you try in vain to satisfy elsewhere?

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“No time to pray! No time to pray!
O who so fraught with earthly care,
As not to give to humble prayer
Some part of day?

No time to pray! No time to pray!
Must care, or business' urgent call
So press us as to take it all,
Each passing day?

Cease not to pray! Cease not to pray!
On Jesus as your all rely;
Would you live happy—happy die?
Take time to pray.”

Do not fear, either, that, because temptations arise as soon as the church has been closed behind you, your religious convictions have been false. The more the enemy has reason to fear your possible salvation, the more he will try to cooperate with your carnal mind to throw you off your spiritual balance. Do not listen to his disheartening suggestions. Get busy, and work with the desire your God has given you. Such was the advice an experienced minister gave a doubting woman. She had been converted as a direct result of his preaching. But later on she began to doubt her sincerity. Did she not find too many sins within her breast to believe that she really yielded herself to Christ? In the anxiety of her soul

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she travelled many miles with her horse and buggy. Her minister had moved to a different town. Him she must see! He would help her! All morning she traveled the rough roads. In the afternoon she reached the parsonage. But the minister could not receive her. He was just ready to leave home upon an urgent errand. He listened to her appeal, however. And his comment? "I can say but one thing: go, and work with that which God has given you."

Disappointed she started upon the long and tiresome journey homeward. Did she have to spend a day traveling for such advice as this? As she joggled along, however, the meaning of the pastor's word impressed itself upon her mind. She understood. God had given her a capital, small perhaps. But there was a beginning. She had forgotten to put her talent in the bank, and draw its interest. From the man with whom she had sought aid, she turned to the Lord who "would perfect that which concerned her (Ps. 138)."

Do not wait, then, to come to Christ until you will have received a written notice, 'Thou are one of Mine'. For such state-

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ments are not issued from the heavenly Bank of God's Sure Promises. You have three things: God's "sure word of promise"; God's sacrament; and the desire to be saved. The first two are unalterable. But the third, if only sincere, is equally much "without repentance." Remember, Scripture teaches that you are dead in trespasses and sins. Now a dead man cannot stir. He cannot even wish for salvation. For he is dead. Wherever there is a true desire for the bread of life, therefore, God has been working.

Hence let me remind you of the

ENCOURAGEMENT

which the Reformed conception of the Truth may impart to those who would like to be saved, but are encumbered with fear. As you know, no system of thought emphasizes as strongly as does the Reformed the fact of "total depravity." This fact, that the natural man is totally unable to do anything whatever of a meritorious character, is not generally recognized. The thought is not at all popular. Most men seek some good in themselves wherewith

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they hope to plead before God. Even if Christ admittedly must work most of their salvation. Scripture, however, teaches very plainly this total depravity. *We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags* (Is. 64:6), is said by an inspired Israelite. Of Gentiles and Jews alike Paul repeats. *There is none that doeth good, no not one* (Rom. 3:12). These quotations might be multiplied ten times. But let it suffice to look at the expressions, *dead in sins, dead in trespasses and sins*, as quoted above. These terms occur in Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13. Both times it is stated that this being dead, spiritually dead, was the original condition of believers. And that, in order to do good, they had to be *quicken*^d, that is made alive, by God. Hence the expression "being born again" as used by Christ. All this means that man, as far as doing God's commandments in an acceptable way, is absolutely unable. Dead is dead; not half, or almost dead. A dead man can neither stir nor move. Hence, he has to be *made* alive, to undergo being born.

But now, what is included in this? That

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whenever, and wherever there is a true desire to serve God, and to be saved by Him, God has already given the new birth. For without the work of His Spirit, there is no inkling of life. Hence, the admonition is entirely in its place, *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God Who worketh in you both to will and to work, for His good pleasure* (Phil. 2:12, 13). That is, since man of himself is dead, which includes his will as part of the dead man, he cannot even *will* to be saved. If he wills, therefore, God has begun the good work in him. But God does not do an imperfect work. When He has "quicken'd", life must reveal itself. As truly as a dead man cannot stir, a living man cannot remain motionless. Hence, with the life God has given you in the desire for His salvation, you must begin to work.

But why must you work out your own salvation with that God-given vitality, "with fear and trembling?" For two reasons, First, because *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it* (Jer. 17:9)? It is possible that you deceive yourself. That what you

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mistake for thirst of the living water is only fear of condemnation, or, of the results of sin in this life. Should you be afraid that your desire is not genuine, all you will have to do is to repeat frequently the prayer of David, *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults* (Ps. 19:12). Or his petition, *Search Thou me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting* (Ps. 139: 23, 24).

So this matter is simple enough. Should you fear that you are not sincere, ask your God to find out for you whether you are sincere, and to lead you in the right way. That prayer cannot but be answered. Do you doubt the sincerity of that very prayer? There is the other prayer, that you may be cleansed from secret faults.

The second reason why you should work with fear and trembling? It is that unless you work earnestly and continuously, you will not attain to *the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls* (1 Peter 1:9). God wants you to work out your own salvation with the new life and strength

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He gave you. Why? Just because He wants it. That is all. And that is enough. Why does God want a man after he gave him life, to eat in order to sustain and develop that life? Just because that is the way He thinks wise. Now, as God wanted Adam to eat, altho God was to keep him alive thru His power, thus He wants you to get busy, and work for your salvation, altho it is God who works in you. It is God Who upholds your physical life. It is you who do the eating. It would be you who would do the murder, should you stop from eating. It is the same way here. Since God has given you life (the desire to be saved by Christ), the next step must be taken by you. You must eat. And what is that? It is to come to Christ, saying, 'Lord, here I am. Without Thee I can do nothing. With Thee I can do all Thou wantest me to do.'

"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee:
Leave, ah leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me."

To do this is to surrender yourself to Him. It is essentially the same as to make confession of the Lord Jesus as your

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Savior. It is that which we have seen is necessary unto salvation (Rom. 10:9).

Now then, let me speak just a few more words concerning this undue fear which keeps many from Christ and confession, and I will ask your attention but a minute for a closing appeal.

Do not omit confessing for fear that your temptations will be too strong for you to overcome. These temptations *will* come. But they will be harder to overcome if you have kept shy of Jesus. The more strongly and definitely you bind yourself to Him, the more surely you will receive His help. For He promised you that He would be your strong friend. Remember that! He never broke His promise to this day. If you plead the promise, He is faithful.

Do not fear the trials of your faith. They are bound to come. Much sorrow, pain and grief may await you. But with Christ you will be able to endure to the end. Should you, however, go thru life without Christ, losses and bereavements will not be spared you for that reason. It will be only that much more difficult. For you would not be able to sing amidst affliction, "What a

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Friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear!" Sad, Oh sad, the life of him who has to bear life's burden alone!

Do not fear to meet with the consistory of your church. Though they may remember the follies of your youthful days, they are not inquisitors. They pray for the conversion of God's Covenanted Youth. They ask of God that the seed of the church may serve Him. They will, therefore, not try to send you back, or to catch you in your words. If your knowledge of the Truth be at all satisfactory (and more ignorant ones than you have passed), and your desire to follow Christ by the grace of God is sincere, they will be glad of your coming. They will send you upon your way with a prayer and a word of encouragement.

Now then, I have answered some of the objections that may have caused your long delay. I have taken them from what was told me by young people of our own day, and in our own churches. Of these difficulties I have taken up the most prevalent.

It is possible that I have not hit the mark in your case. Then why not go to your own pastor, and tell him what seems to be the

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trouble? Why are our young people so shy, so reticent? Your pastor would not ridicule you, nor betray your secrets. Not any more than would the doctor to whom you would go with your bodily ailments. Your minister is the doctor of the soul.

Do place yourself before the question, What keeps me from Christ? Do not say, Salvation does not depend upon confession. You have heard Paul say that it does. Moreover, should your faith be too small to be confessed, could it be sufficient to die with it, and meet your Judge?

Do not say, I have prayed; but my prayer does not bring any result. For you would only show that your prayer was either not sincere enough, or not persistent enough; or, possibly, both. Think how Jacob wrestled in prayer with God all night; how he was rewarded. Gen. 32.

Do not hesitate because of the weakness of your faith. For until now you have kept away from the Lord's Supper. That sacrament He instituted in order to strengthen our faith. To confess Him is to ask admission to this Table. It is, therefore, a confession of the imperfection of your

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faith, and a seeking of strengthening of your faith in the God-appointed way. Do you wonder your faith does not grow while you ignore one of the chief means of growth instituted by Christ?

And finally. One more "don't". In the text upon the frontleaf God suggests that His people could not produce any evidence why he should justify them. He laughs as it were with a Divine ridicule at such an utter impossibility. Now that is true of you, too, is it not? You have nothing to offer but sin? At the same time, however, the Lord graciously offers to blot out their transgressions freely. Is it not marvelous mercy? What judge was known to forgive so freely? Is not this true in your case also, that God has offered you so great salvation?

Why not come then? Why not do it now?

"While we pray, and while we plead,
While you see your soul's deep need,
While your Father calls you home,
Will you not, my brother, come?"

Postponement may cause eternal regret, and self-accusation. Remember, more people under thirty years of age die every year than older ones.

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“And oh, for the weeping and wailing,
As the lost were told of their fate!
They cried to the rocks and the mountains;
They prayed, but their prayer was too late.”

Why should you deceive yourself, and think that at some future day you will feel more like coming than you do now? What reason have you for such a belief? And that while you are developing your character in the other direction?

And why should you wilfully deprive yourself of the joy you may now taste?

The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. Ps. 19:8.

And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. John 6:37.

“Now with joyful exultation
Let us sing Jehovah’s praise,
To the Rock of our salvation
Loud hosannas let us raise;
Thankful tribute gladly bringing
Let us come before Him now,
And, with psalms His praises singing,
Joyful in His presence bow.

To the Lord, such might revealing,
Let us come with reverence meet,
And, before our Maker kneeling,
Let us worship at His feet.
He is our own God, and leads us,
We the people of His care;
With a shepherd’s hand He feeds us
As His flock in pastures fair.

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While He proffers peace and pardon
Let us hear His voice today,
Lest, if we our hearts should harden,
We should perish in the way;
Lest to us, so unbelieving,
He in judgment shall declare:
Ye, so long My Spirit grieving,
Never in My rest can share."

THE END.



